

TCCC Cancer Facts

Skin Cancer in Tennessee



What is Skin Cancer?

Skin cancer is the most common form of cancer in the United States. The three major types of skin cancer are the highly curable basal cell and squamous cell carcinomas and the more serious malignant melanoma. Like many cancers, skin cancers start as precancerous lesions. These precancerous lesions are changes in skin that are not cancer, but could become cancer over time. Medical professionals often refer to these changes as dysplasia.

Risk Factors

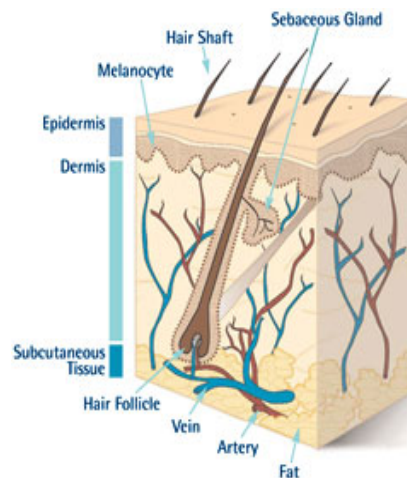
Although anyone can develop skin cancer, some people are at particular risk. Risk factors include

- Light skin color, hair color, or eye color.
- Family history of skin cancer.
- Personal history of skin cancer.
- Chronic exposure to the sun.
- History of sunburns early in life.
- Certain types of moles or a large number of moles.
- Freckles, which indicate sun sensitivity and sun damage.

PROTECT YOURSELF!



Courtesy of America Cancer Society.



The Symptoms

Symptoms which may indicate skin cancer include any spot or lesion that:

- changes in size
- has an irregular shape
- has an irregular color
- becomes inflamed
- forms an ulcer
- oozes
- feels different

Although these signs do not necessarily mean you have skin cancer, you should visit your doctor to have it checked as soon as possible.

Prevention Tips

- To reduce your risk of skin cancer, you should minimize your exposure to the sun.
- Always use a sunscreen with a protection factor of at least 15.
- Wear protective clothing.
- Remain in the shade as much as possible - especially between 11am and 3 pm when the sun is at its strongest.
- Don't use sunbeds.
- If you notice any changes in your skin, you should visit your doctor as soon as possible.

Diagnosing

Treatment

About the TCCCC:

Tennessee Comprehensive Cancer Control Coalition (TCCCC) is a diverse group of partners and organizations from across the state who are dedicated to reducing cancer incidence, morbidity, and mortality in Tennessee.

A statewide approach to cancer control is the most effective way to tackle such a monumental public health concern. No single agency or organization can meet the challenge alone.

Physicians, nurses, other health care professionals, community leaders, business leaders, researchers, and cancer advocates who share our mission are encouraged to join the TCCCC.

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If you have a worrisome mole or other lesion, your primary care provider will probably refer you to a dermatologist. The dermatologist will examine any moles in question and, in many cases, the entire skin surface.

- Any lesions that are difficult to identify, or are thought to be skin cancer, may then be checked.
- A sample of skin (biopsy) will be taken so that the suspicious area of skin can be examined under a microscope.
- A biopsy can almost always be done in the dermatologist's office.
- If a biopsy shows that you have malignant melanoma, you will probably undergo further testing to determine the extent of spread of the disease, if any. This may involve blood tests, a chest x-ray, and other tests as needed.

Treatment for basal cell carcinoma and squamous cell carcinoma is straightforward. Usually, surgical removal of the lesion is adequate. Malignant melanoma, however, may require several treatment methods, including surgery, radiation therapy, and chemotherapy. Because of the complexity of treatment decisions, people with malignant melanoma may benefit from the combined expertise of the dermatologist, a cancer surgeon, and an oncologist.

What Is The Outlook?

It is important that skin cancer is detected and treated as early as possible. If treated early, most skin cancers can be cured; if untreated, the cancer can spread to other parts of your body. Skin cancer can recur, so it is important that you examine your skin regularly for any changes and see your doctor for a check-up every six to 12 months.

The ABCD's of Melanoma Skin Cancer

A sudden or continuous change in the appearance of a mole is a sign that you should see your doctor. The ABCD rule can help you remember the symptoms of melanoma:

A = Asymmetry: melanoma lesions are typically asymmetrical, whereas benign moles are typically round and symmetrical.

B = Border: melanoma lesions frequently have uneven or irregular borders (ie, ragged or notched edges), whereas benign moles have smooth, even borders.

C = Color: melanoma lesions often contain multiple shades of brown or black, whereas benign moles are usually a single shade of brown.

D = Diameter: early melanoma lesions are often more than 6 mm in diameter, whereas benign moles are usually less than 6 mm in diameter.

Visit us on the Web:

www2.state.tn.us/health/CCCC

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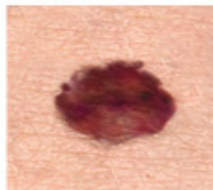


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Asymmetry



Color



Border Irregularity



Diameter

